though the tincture is made turbid by it. After the decoction was filtrated from the mucus, which had been coagulated by alcohol, it gave a precipitate with nitrate of mercury, but none with muriate of tin. Sulphate of iron caused a dark green precipitate from the decoction, and but little change in the tincture. No distinct evidence of resin presented itself. A substance which may perhaps be considered a variety of extractive matter, appears to exist in this plant, as the tincture was affected in nearly the same manner by the salts of tin and mercury above mentioned, as the filtrated decoction.

Water may be considered an adequate solvent for the chief proximate principles of this plant.

The medicinal reputation of the Spigelia is founded on the powers which it is supposed to possess as a vermifuge. This reputation is now so generally established, that the plant has become a considerable article of commerce to various parts of the world, from our southern states. This is a sufficient evidence, that the medicine has, to a certain extent, satisfied public expectation, and obtained the sanction of practitioners. But beyond this, it is difficult to speak confidently on the subject. The Spigelia belongs to a class of medicines, which are frequently prescribed, without positive proof of the existence of the cause which they are intended to remove; which often fail altogether in the hands of the most successful practitioners; which frequently succeed merely because they are backed with medicines of a more active class; and whose apparent success is sometimes the consequence solely of a diseased state of the body.* Our plant is however entitled to trial, especially where it can be obtained fresh, and in full strength. A physician of the southern states, for whose opinion I have much respect, Dr. Norcom of Edenton, N. C. informed me some years since, that the Spigelia was

* From the list of equivocal anthelmintics, I would except those which have a cathartic operation, also a number of mineral origin. But I am fully persuaded, that many reputed vermifuges have enjoyed a reputation which they do not deserve. The *Dolichos pruriens* has received the commendations of practitioners and medical writers, on the presumption that its spiculæ exert the same stimulant effect on the bodies of worms in the alimentary canal, that they do on the human skin externally. I was long ago inclined to doubt the power of these spiculæ to withstand the digestive process of the stomach. My suspicions were confirmed upon finding that simple maceration in warm water for an hour, dissolves their virus, and renders them incapable of producing their usual stimulus of itching, when applied to the skin. Some late experiments by my pupil, Dr. Chandler, have shewn that the gastric juice destroys their activity in the same manner.

It is not necessary in this place to revert to the *Fern root* of Madame Nouffer, and various other exploded anthelmintics of its kind.

JACOB BIGELOW *American Medical Botany* BOSTON, 1817-1820 CARY GRAPHIC ARTS COLLECTION, ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY Octavo